

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Ashland Technologies, Inc.

Manufacturers Resource Center

Ashland Technologies Targets Focused Growth

Client Profile:

Ashland Technologies, located in Ashland, Pennsylvania, is a contract manufacturer of machined and fabricated parts. The company also manufactures and distributes its own branded line of fuel filter systems for all diesel applications. Ashland Technologies employs 25 people.

Situation:

Ashland Technologies made 99.5 percent of its products. With international competition devouring this market, it was apparent to Ashland President Bill Wydra Jr., that a long-term strategy for its future growth was needed. He requested the assistance of the Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to help him determine where the company should direct its future growth.

Solution:

MRC and Bill agreed that the company needed to develop a proprietary line of products for long-term growth. MRC was familiar with several opportunities to develop in-house products for Ashland; and, as an affiliate of Lehigh University, determined that the best fit for Ashland's needs was the Lehigh IPD program. The IPD program encompasses students, faculty and course expertise from the colleges of Arts & Sciences, Business & Economics, and Engineering & Applied Science and Education. The multi-disciplinary project team approach to technical entrepreneurship fosters an environment that encourages innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit within the realities of design, business and engineering functions.

Bill presented two product ideas to the IPD Team that needed to be researched, designed, and engineered for workability. The first product idea was a four-seat Gyroscope Ride -- to design and build a prototype for sales to amusement ride companies nationwide. This idea was a natural fit to Ashland's new proprietary product development since Ashland already produces parts and rides for the amusement park industry. The second idea was a French Fry Vending Machine -- to design and build a state-of-the-art vending machine encompassing wireless technology to signal when the machine needs refilling. Currently, Ashland supplies a part for similar vending machines, but no company has a dominant market share. With the help of MRC, Bill hopes to produce this vending machine and place it next to every soda machine nationwide within the next two years.

Results:

- * Projected sales of \$3 million for gyroscope which will be ready for production in November 2005.
- * Developed prototypes that are well engineered and workable.

Testimonial:

"What surprised me the most, and that I was not expecting, was the level of creativity, pure scientific knowledge and skill that MRC helped make happen. I would have never known about the IPD

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Program without them, and even if I did, I might not have the fortitude to try them."

Bill Wydra Jr., President